

MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION

8/17/16

P.O. Box 614, Natchez, MS 39121

INTRO-

CONNER HOUSE

8/17/16

FORESTRY/LOGGING/LANDOWNER

Over the past century the USACE has been tasked with modifying and manipulating the Mississippi River and its tributaries to minimize the impact of flooding and to navigation and commerce on the river. As in any environment, every action has a reaction. I am here today to make the Commission, aware that the commerce in the batture area of the Mississippi River between miles 300 and 450 is being adversely affected by some of the decisions. The batture area predominately consists of forestland and ag land. Commerce in the batture is dependent on the River reaching its mean low water mark in the late spring and early summer and remaining near that level until the spring rise. I am in the forestry and logging business in the batture. It has become very obvious to me that as levees, houses, roads, and other developments spring up in the upper Mississippi River drainage, that more water is being forced into our area of the river. This water is coming faster and more frequently. It hits the bottleneck at Old River Control Structure, and the flow slows down. This cause the low ground in the batture in the Lower Mississippi River to stay inundated with surface water and/or ground water.

Personal Affects (low ground never dries out)

- 1) Reduced batture logging season (was July- Jan.) now Aug-Nov.
Loggers and mill operators are behind and losing money.
Vast acreage that used to be loggable every summer has not been dry enough to log for over 5 years.
- 2) Significant mortality showing in mature timber in the lower elevations
Landowners are losing timber that they have grown for decades. Some not salvageable
- 3) Significant wind throw caused by wet soils in the lower elevations. Ground never firms up and dries out.
- 4) Regeneration never makes it over a year because of prolonged flooding during the growing season. This will cause long term negative environmental impacts as timber production will be eliminated on some of this acreage.
- 5) Long term hydrology changes in the lower elevations of the batture.
 - Typically the river goes down after the spring rise, the lower elevations cypress and willow ground eventually dries by August or September. This drying continues through November when the winter rains generally start.
 - Under a normal river pattern these low elevations dry deep. This allows for logging access, not only to the lower elevations, but also to higher elevations that are only accessible by crossing the lower elevations and sloughs.

- Under a normal river pattern these low elevations dry deep. This allows for adequate time for the regeneration to grow and develop a root structure that will allow it to make it through an occasional high water during the growing season.
- Under a normal river pattern these low elevations dry deep. This allows for the ground to firm up and the roots of the mature trees to grow. If the ground around the roots never dries, the roots of the tree will rot and the trees will die or fall over. This has become more prevalent over the last few years.

Theory

As development (river, roads, and concrete) increases up river, more water is forced into the MS River Drainage system.

- 1) Water reaches us faster and more frequently
- 2) Number of days at mean low water mark is reduced
- 3) Lower elevations do not dry out like they used to.
 - If these lower elevations dried out, they could take multiple rains before they became saturated.
 - Over the past 5 years these low elevations never dried completely, they can't soak up a rain or two.
 - These low elevations serve as a **sponge**; they absorb a large amount of water before they become saturated. The two or three rain events that they absorb were critical to providing a dry 6 plus months for our area.

Requests:

It is my request that the Corps change their management practices to allow the batture areas between Baton Rouge and Vicksburg to reach mean low water level and stay there for 6 to 8 months out of the year as they historically did. Today, we are being directly and adversely affected for the benefit of the upper river drainage and the Atchafalaya drainage.

Suggestion:

Lowest cost and quickest to implement- Increase the 70/30 flow into the Atchafalaya River during the mid-range river stages. This would get us to the mean low water mark quicker, by allowing more flow to reach the Gulf quicker. The goal would be to get the batture flooding back to pre 1970's status.

Mid Range cost, but only a solution for the areas with out Protection Levees- Levee off the unprotected batture in the areas that are unprotected to avoid annual adverse economic impact.

Last resort- Mitigate the economic losses being forced on upon us, as was done in the Atchafalaya basin, through the Flowage easements or the Corps Conservation Easements. This would mitigate the long term economic impacts of the change in hydrology, but would not address the environmental impacts.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a smaller 'R' and a horizontal line extending to the right.